neil gaiman - bryan talbot - mark buckingham - gary amaro - dick giordano - tony harris - steve leialoha

DC

VERTIGO

NO. 56

DEC 93

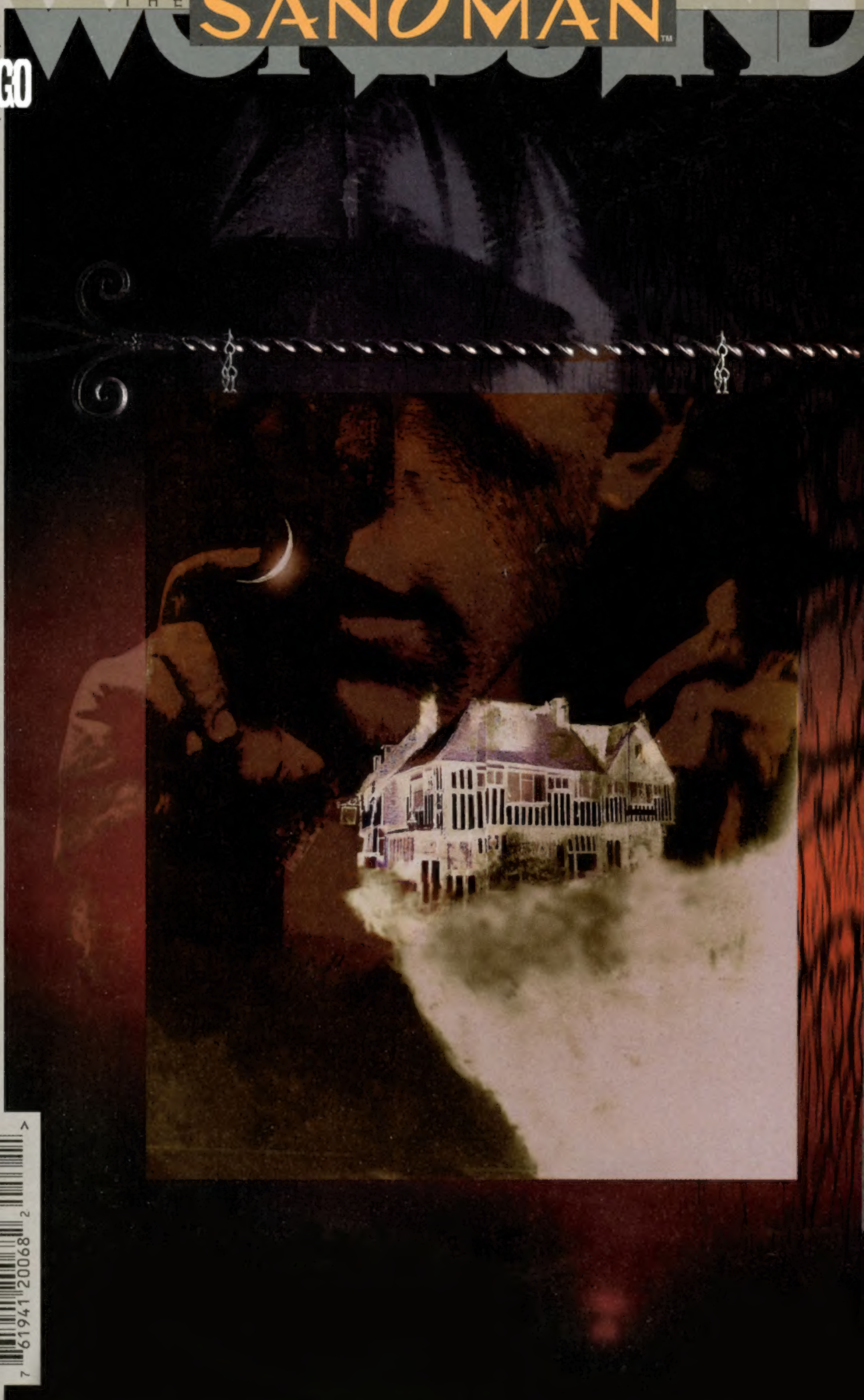
$1.95 US

$2.50 CAN

£1.25 UK

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

THE SANDMAN™



DIRECT SALES

7 61941 20068 2

05611

I THINK THAT THE CLURACAN HAS HAD ENOUGH.

I KNOW HE PRIDES HIMSELF ON HIS CAPACITY FOR ALCOHOL, BUT THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN INTOXICATION AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND HE'S JUST ABOUT TO CROSS IT.

HANG ON. YOU CAN'T JUST SAY WHAT YOU SAID AND THEN CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

SAY? WHAT DID I SAY?

THAT YOU HAVE AN EXPLANATION FOR US.

HE'S RIGHT. YOU DID. WELL?

I MEAN, WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHAT BROUGHT US HERE? HOW DO WE LEAVE?

THIS PLACE IS THE INN AT THE END OF ALL WORLDS.

NONE OF YOU WERE BROUGHT HERE. EACH OF YOU WAS TRAVELLING, AND WAS CAUGHT IN AN UNSEASONABLE STORM OF SOME KIND.

YOU MADE YOUR WAY HERE BY LUCK, AND TOOK REFUGE AND ADVANTAGE OF THE HOSPITALITY OFFERED.

AND YOU WILL LEAVE HERE, WHEN THE STORM IS OVER.

GOOD LADY, MIGHT I BE SO BOLD AS TO ASK FOR A JEROBOAM OF CRISP WHITE WINE. A CHABLIS, PERHAPS, OR A WHITE BORDEAUX?

CLURACAN, YOU'RE DRUNK. YOU'RE NOT HAVING ANYTHING ELSE.

OH. WELL, THAT'S PERFECTLY REASONABLE.

BUT YOU *TOLD* US THAT. OR *HE* DID.

WHAT'S A *REALITY STORM*? I MEAN, IT DOES SOUND LIKE *SOMETHING* FROM STAR TREK OR *SOMETHING*.

WELL, *SOMETIMES* BIG THINGS HAPPEN, AND THEY *ECHO*.

THOSE ECHOES CRASH ACROSS THE WORLDS. THEY ARE RIPPLES IN THE FABRIC OF THINGS. OFTEN THEY MANIFEST AS STORMS.

REALITY *ISN'T* FRAGILE. IT'S-- IT'S *HUGE* AND *BIG* AND *SOLID*.

I MEAN, YOU THINK REALITY IS *FRAGILE*, YOU SHOULD TRY BANGING YOUR *HEAD* AGAINST A BRICK WALL. HUH?

REALITY IS A *VERY* FRAGILE THING, AFTER ALL.

THAT'S REALITY.

REALLY? WELL, HOW *DID* YOU GET HERE, BRANT TUCKER?

IT'S *NOT REAL*. IT'S A *DREAM*. IT'S *NOT* THE *REAL* WORLD.

LOOK AROUND YOU. THIS IS WHAT'S LEFT WHEN THE REAL WORLDS END.

THIS IS NO PART OF THE REALM OF DREAMS, OR DEATH, OR DARKNESS.

THIS IS A FREE HOUSE.

IT IS NO PART OF ANY KINGDOM OR EMPIRE.

WHEN A WORLD ENDS, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING LEFT OVER. A STORY, PERHAPS, OR A VISION, OR A HOPE.

THIS INN IS A REFUGE, AFTER THE LIGHTS GO OUT. FOR A WHILE.

SO WE'RE NOT DEAD?

NOT CURRENTLY, NO. DEAD PEOPLE DO COME HERE, FROM TIME TO TIME. AND, IN THE END, THEY GO ELSEWHERE.

I STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT A REALITY STORM IS.

I TOLD YOU. IT'S WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS THAT'S SO BIG, IT... RIPPLES. IT UNSETTLES THINGS.

AND WHAT MANNER OF BIG THING WOULD THIS BE, LADY?

I DO NOT KNOW.

THERE ARE RUMORS, BUT THAT IS ALL THEY ARE.

IT IS CERTAINLY AN EVENT OF GREAT MOMENT AND CONSEQUENCE. SOMETHING THAT REVERBERATES ACROSS TIME AND SPACE AND MYTH.

I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE INN SO FULL.

LADY? HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD CHARGE OF THIS TAVERN?

LONG ENOUGH.

EXCUSE ME. I THINK I'M NEEDED OVER THERE.

I HOPE SHE COMES BACK SOON. I'VE GOT A QUESTION FOR HER.

YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?

WHY THE STORIES?

IT IS PART OF A TRADITION. ISOLATED TRAVELLERS EXCHANGE TALES, TO KEEP THE DARK AT BAY.

BUT WHY STORIES LIKE *THESE*? ALL THE ONES WE'VE HEARD...

...IT'S ALL *BOYS' OWN* STORIES, ISN'T IT?

WE'VE HEARD A SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURE, A SEA STORY, A GANGSTER STORY, A GRISLY BOYS' FUNERAL STORY, AND EVEN A LITTLE GHOST STORY.

THEY'RE *BOYS'* FICTIONS.

THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE.

BRANT? THE STORY YOU HEARD UPSTAIRS.

WHAT WAS THAT, THEN? A HORATIO ALGER STORY OF SOME POOR BOY BECOMING PRESIDENT?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT. YES.

SEE?

I MEAN, SURE, THEY PASS THE TIME. THEY ENTERTAIN. BUT HOW DO THEY HELP YOU MAKE *SENSE* OF ANYTHING? THE WORLD ISN'T *LIKE* THAT.

PEOPLE DON'T WALK INTO THE DREAMS OF CITIES. THE WORLD ISN'T... *LIKE* THAT.

I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING ELSE I NOTICED: THERE AREN'T ANY *WOMEN* IN THESE STORIES.

DID ANYONE *ELSE* NOTICE THAT?

BUT, WELL. WHAT ABOUT *ME*, MISSIE? THERE'S *ME*. THERE WAS *MY* STORY.

THAT WAS A WOMAN'S STORY.

OH, *PLEASE*.

LOOK, GIRL, THE WHOLE *POINT* OF YOUR STORY IS THAT THERE *WASN'T* A WOMAN IN IT. JUST A SHIP FULL OF SAILORS, AND A GIANT DICK THRUSTING OUT OF THE OCEAN.

THAT WASN'T MY STORY.

SURE IT WAS.

I MEAN, THERE AREN'T ANY REAL WOMEN IN ANY OF THE STORIES *I'VE* HEARD TONIGHT. WE'RE JUST PRETTY FIGURES IN THE BACKGROUND TO BE LOVED OR LOST OR AVOIDED OR OBEYED OR ... WHATEVER.

VERY WELL, CHARLENE MOONEY. I WILL TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MANY STORIES TOLD TONIGHT I WAS UNABLE TO HEAR, AND THOUGH I MYSELF HAVE TOLD NO TALE.

SO SHALL *YOU* THEN TELL US *YOUR* STORY?

I DON'T *HAVE* A GODDAMN STORY.

NO? THEN WHAT *DO* YOU HAVE?

WELL... I'VE GOT A JOB I DON'T MUCH LIKE, SELLING SOFTWARE. I'VE GOT AN APARTMENT THAT I LOATHE.

I'VE GOT AN EX-HUSBAND WHO COMES OVER WHEN HE GETS LONELY AND TRIES TO TALK ME INTO HAVING SEX WITH HIM FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE, AND SOMETIMES I EVEN SAY YES.

I JOINED A LOCAL THEATER GROUP LONG ENOUGH TO REALIZE I'D NEVER BE AN ACTOR, AND JOINED A WRITING CIRCLE LONG ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT I DON'T HAVE ANY-THING TO SAY WORTH WRITING DOWN.

I COME HOME FROM THE OFFICE EVERY NIGHT AND FIX MYSELF NOTHING MUCH INTERESTING TO EAT OR I SEND OUT FOR PIZZA, AND I FALL ASLEEP IN FRONT OF THE TV.

I WAS GOING TO CHICAGO TO VISIT MY FOLKS. I WAS ASLEEP WHEN I FELT THE CAR HIT SOME-THING--*BLAM!*-- AND THEN WE WERE OFF THE ROAD.

BRANT HERE WAS DRIVING. HE DESIGNS OUR CATALOGUES.

HE WAS HEADING OUT TO CHICAGO FOR TWO WEEKS AS WELL, AND WANTED TO SAVE SOME MONEY AND SO WE AGREED TO SPLIT THE COST OF THE GAS AND SHARE THE DRIVING.

WE AREN'T *FRIENDS* OR ANYTHING. BRANT FELT ME UP AT THE OFFICE XMAS PARTY TWO YEARS AGO, BUT WE WERE *BOTH* INCREDIBLY DRUNK--

Jesus, Charlene.

--AND WE'VE BOTH PRETENDED THAT IT NEVER HAPPENED. EVEN TO EACH OTHER. I MEAN THERE WASN'T EVEN ANY OFFICE GOSSIP.

I KNOW THAT IF I'D BEEN DRIVING WE WOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE. I'D NEVER HAVE GONE OFF THE ROAD.

I ALWAYS KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING, YOU SEE. IN MY LIFE.

I DON'T NEED PEOPLE. I'VE NEVER NEEDED OTHER PEOPLE. I DON'T...

CHARLENE? ARE YOU OKAY?

YES.

NO...

JUST LEAVE ME ALONE, BRANT.

WOMEN, HUH?

WHAT DID I SAY? I MEAN, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

WELL, YOU GOTTA LAUGH.

JESUS. THAT WAS CLOSE.

TRUE. BUT WE *WILL* BE SAFE IN THIS PLACE. THE TAVERN ITSELF CANNOT BE HARMED; THAT IS THE WAY OF THINGS. IT IS BEING CONTINUALLY CREATED; AFTER ALL, WORLDS ARE ENDING ALL THE TIME.

HOW DO *YOU* KNOW SO MUCH?

UNLIKE YOU, FRIEND TUCKER, I HAVE TRAVELLED HERE BEFORE. THOSE OF US WHO JOURNEY BETWEEN REALMS ENCOUNTER IT ON OCCASION.

WHAT--SO *YOU* CAME HERE ON *PURPOSE*?

INDEED *NO*. A TAVERN IS NOT A DESTINATION, BRANT TUCKER. MERELY A PLACE TO REST UPON THE WAY.

MISTER TUCKER? WHAT IS *YOUR* FINAL DESTINATION?

I WAS GOING TO *CHICAGO*. I'D GOT A JOB OFFER FROM A SOFTWARE OUTFIT OVER THAT WAY, AND I WANTED TO CHECK THEM OUT, AND I HAD A COUPLA WEEKS' VACATION OWING.

LISTEN TO THE STORM ROAR. IS THAT *HAIL* WHICH BANGS AND POUNDS SO ON THE ROOF?

POSSIBLY. *DICKON*! MORE *ALE* HERE, LAD!

I HAVE MY *OWN* THEORY ABOUT REALITY STORMS, MY FRIENDS, WHICH DIFFERS A LITTLE FROM OUR HOSTESS'S.

I POSIT THAT THEY ARE CAUSED WHEN TWO CONFLICTING REALITIES MEET OR OVERLAP, IN THE SAME WAY NATURAL STORMS ARE PRECIPITATED BY THE MEETING OF HOT AIR AND COLD.

IT *IS*, HOWEVER, A DIFFICULT HYPOTHESIS TO TEST EMPIRICALLY. THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND OF THESE STORMS IN MY LIFETIME, AND WE CENTAURS CONSIDER OURSELVES A LONG-LIVED FOLK INDEED.

FIERCE FIERY WARRIORS FIGHT AMONG THE CLOUDS..

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW...

KNEW A SONG ABOUT THAT

NO CARES HAVE I TO GRIE-EEVE ME, NO PRIDDY LITTLE GIRLS TO DECEI-♪ EEVE ME...♫

...GOT TUPPENCE TO SPEND AND TUPPENCE TO LEND 'Z I GO ROLLING HOOOME...♫

WRONG SONG. HEHHH.

FEEL A BIT SICK, ACKCHERLY.

GOTTER POWDER MY NOSE.

THASS MORE A FIGURE OF SPEECH.

REALLY PLANNING TO PUKE, PISS AND PASS OUT AGAIN.

HOPEFULLY AFTER I FIND THE TOILETS...

THERE'S--THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING--

NOT THE STORM. I MEAN, SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENING.

COME AND LOOK!

MOVE OVER, CAN'T YOU? I CAN'T SEE!

WHAT ARE WE MEANT TO BE LOOKING AT, ANYWAY?

IS THE STORM OVER YET?

OHH. THAT FEELS BETTER.

WHAT'S GOING ON, EH?

DID SOMEONE SAY THE STORM WAS OVER? IS THAT WHAT IT IS?

I DON'T KNOW. HE SAID TO LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOW, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR.

AH MY LOVE HE IS A KNIGHT SO BOLD
IMPRESSIVE IN HIS ARDOR,
OR A MINSTREL OR A PIRATE WITH HIS
THIGHS AND ARMS SO FIRM,
WITH A MANDOLIN OR AN ANGRY GRIN
AND A DEAD WIFE IN THE LARDER...

CAN'T YOU SEE IT? LOOK! UP THERE.

AND SOMEWHERE ABOUT THIS POINT IN THE SONG SOMEONE NORMALLY GETS TRANSFORMED INTO A LOATHLY WORRRRRRRRRM.

FAUGH. BY ALL THE GODS, CLURACAN-- CAN'T YOU BREATHE IN THE OTHER DIRECTION?

UP WHERE?

OH.

I SEE IT NOW.

IT'S... IT'S VERY BIG, ISN'T IT?

SO, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, I WAS STARING OUT OF ONE OF THE WINDOWS OF THE INN AT THE END OF THE WORDS.

WORLDS. I MEANT WORLDS.

THE SKY WAS BEGINNING TO CLEAR. YOU COULD SEE THE STARS AND THIS HUGE CRESCENT MOON, WITH THE CLOUDS RUSHING PAST IT SO THAT, FOR ONE CRAZY MOMENT, IT LOOKED LIKE THE CLOUDS WERE STANDING STILL AND THE MOON WAS TUMBLING OFF THROUGH THE SKY.

THERE'S A FEELING I FIRST GOT IN AUSTRALIA, WHEN I WAS A STUDENT, BACK-PACKING MY WAY AROUND THE WORLD, AND I'VE HAD IT IN THE MIDWEST A FEW TIMES, DRIVING THROUGH THE FLAT CORNFIELDS THAT GO ON FOR EVER. AND IN THE MOUNTAINS...

IT'S AN OPTICAL ILLUSION, I EXPECT...

THE BIG SKY. THAT'S HOW I THINK OF IT. THERE ARE JUST SOME PLACES WHERE THE SKY SEEMS SO MUCH BIGGER.

THAT WAS HOW I FELT, LOOKING OUT OF THE WINDOW.

AND I FELT SO TINY, LIKE A SPECK OF DUST, OR A DREAM.

AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS A CLOUD FORMATION. OR. I DON'T KNOW. MY IMAGINATION MAYBE.

BUT IT WASN'T.

IT WAS A MAN.

HE WAS WALKING ACROSS THE SKY, SLOWLY, HIS FACE ALMOST HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS OF HIS HOOD.

HE WAS CARRYING A BOOK.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG HE TOOK TO WALK ACROSS THE SKY.

AFTER THE MAN WITH A BOOK CAME THE MAN WITH THE FLAG, AND AFTER HIM CAME THE PEOPLE CARRYING THE COFFIN.

I WAS WATCHING A FUNERAL PROCESSION. THAT WAS WHAT IT WAS.

I IMAGINED THAT I COULD HEAR MUSIC, A LOW DEEP DIRGE, LIKE THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES, MUSIC TO WHICH THEY MARCHED.

STEP BY STEP BY STEP THEY WALKED ACROSS THE SKY, LIKE GIANTS, WITH THEIR BURDEN ON THEIR SHOULDERS; PACING IN UNISON, SLOW AS TIME.

I FOUND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT MY FATHER. HE DIED ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, AFTER A LONG ILLNESS. SOME KIND OF CANCER IN HIS GUT. IT WASN'T A VERY GOOD TIME FOR ME.

SO I PUT ON A SUIT AND WENT TO HIS FUNERAL, AND CAME AWAY... DISAPPOINTED. THE WHOLE ROUTINE SEEMED AS FOOLISH AND EMPTY AS THE PLASTIC FLOWERS IN THE "CHAPEL OF REST"; A MEANINGLESS ACT, A SHADOW OF SOMETHING REAL.

THE WORDS SAID OVER MY FATHER'S BODY WERE HOLLOW AND DUMB, AND I COULDN'T FIND IT IN ME TO CRY, NOT THEN.

I KNEW I WAS WATCHING THE REAL THING HERE. THERE WAS TRUE GRIEF IN EACH STEP THEY TOOK ACROSS THE SKY, AND THEY SHOULDERED THE CASKET AS IF THEY WERE SHOULDERING THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD.

AND THEY WALKED. I COULD FEEL SOMETHING HOT AND BURNING ON MY CHEEKS, AND MY EYES BEGAN TO STING.

I DON'T KNOW WHO I WAS CRYING FOR, AND I HATED MYSELF FOR IT; BUT I COULDN'T LOOK AWAY.

I'D SPENT--HOW LONG? TWELVE HOURS? A DAY? A WEEK? A MONTH?--IN THE INN, SURROUNDED BY IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE, AND IT HADN'T AFFECTED ME. IT WASN'T *REAL*.

THEN I WATCHED THESE MURKY GIANTS WALK SLOWLY ACROSS THE SKY, AND I FELT LIKE MY WORLD WAS FALLING APART.

LIKE THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO HOLD ON TO. NOTHING LEFT TO BELIEVE.

I WAS WATCHING IT--I *COULDN'T* LOOK AWAY. BUT PART OF ME WAS WATCHING MYSELF WATCHING THE PROCESSION, AND REALIZING THAT WHILE I WATCHED I WAS ...BEING... *CHANGED*, I SUPPOSE.

I WAS SEEING SOMETHING I COULDN'T DESCRIBE; THAT I COULDN'T EXPLAIN.

I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* THEY WERE. I DON'T KNOW WHO HAD DIED, WHO THEY WERE MOURNING, WHOSE CASKET THEY FOLLOWED. BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER.

THEY WERE THERE.

IN THE SKY.

AND I BELIEVED IN MIRACLES.

I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE.

AT THE END OF THE PROCESSION, A BIT BEHIND EVERYONE ELSE, THERE WERE THESE TWO GIRLS.

ONE OF THEM KEPT HESITATING. SHE'D WALK A FEW STEPS AND STOP. LIKE SHE'D FORGOTTEN WHAT SHE WAS DOING, WHERE SHE WAS. THEN SHE'D WALK A LITTLE MORE.

THE OTHER ONE...

THE ONE AT THE END...

I THINK I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER, A LITTLE BIT.

ISN'T THAT DUMB?

BUT IT WAS LIKE I *KNEW* HER.

LIKE SHE WAS MY OLDEST, DEAREST FRIEND.

THE KIND OF PERSON YOU CAN TELL ANYTHING TO, NO MATTER HOW BAD, AND THEY'LL STILL LOVE YOU, BECAUSE THEY KNOW YOU.

I WANTED TO GO *WITH* HER. I WANTED HER TO NOTICE ME.

AND THEN SHE STOPPED WALKING.

UNDER THE MOON, SHE STOPPED. AND SHE LOOKED AT US.

SHE LOOKED AT ME.

MAYBE SHE WAS TRYING TO *TELL* ME SOMETHING; I DON'T KNOW.

SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I WAS THERE.

BUT I'LL ALWAYS LOVE HER. ALL MY LIFE.

THAT WAS THE *LAST* OF THE STORM.

IT IS OVER, NOW. IT WILL BE SAFE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO LEAVE.

MISS? WHO *WERE* THEY? THOSE *GIANTS?* WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

I...I CANNOT *SAY*. SOME OF THEM...I *THOUGHT* I RECOGNIZED...

BUT THE STORM IS *OVER*, GIRL. THERE'S A SHIP THAT WAITS FOR YOU.

LADY? *HOW* DO WE LEAVE THIS PLACE?

BY THE *DOOR*. JUST LEAVE AND WALK. YOU WILL RETURN TO THE WORLDS FROM WHICH YOU CAME, OR ONES VERY SIMILAR.

WHAT IF WE DON'T *WANT* TO GO BACK?

YOU *HAVE* TO GO BACK.

I DID *LIKE* IT HERE, MISS, IN YOUR TAVERN. IT WAS LOVELY AND WARM. AND THEY WERE *SUCH* NICE PEOPLE.

CLURACAN -- ARE YOU ALL *RIGHT?*

AYE.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE *DRUNK*.

I WAS.

ALAS, NO LONGER.

WHERE ARE *YOU* GOING?

I MUST TO FÄERIE: I MUST REPORT UNTO MY QUEEN EACH THING I'VE SEEN AND HEARD; I AM THE MOST UNHAPPY SOUL ALIVE.

I'D HEARD IT SAID THAT FAIRIES *HAVE* NO SOULS.

THEN DO I ACHE, AND BLEED, AND SMART, *ELSE*WHERE; STILL, CALL IT *SOUL* FOR IT IS SOLELY MINE.

FAREWELL, MY SWEET COMPANIONS OF THE VINE.

BRANT TUCKER?

I WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE NECROPOLIS WITH YOU, MASTER KLAPROTH.

PETREFAX. I AM YOUR MASTER. YOU WILL TRAVEL WITH ME.

SO YOU WOULD WHAT, STUDY, TRAVEL AND RETURN?

YES, MASTER KLAPROTH.

MAY I GO WITH YOU AND CHARLENE?

HUH? WITH ME?

PETREFAX, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

BUT, SIR. WHEN SHALL THERE BE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY LIKE THIS? THERE ARE COUNTLESS WORLDS AND REALMS AND CITIES OUT THERE. SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE TO BE BROUGHT HOME TO LITHARGE.

I DO NOT APPROVE OF THIS NONSENSE, PETREFAX.

I'M NOT FUSSY, LAD. YOU CAN TRAVEL WITH ME.

BOY! HERE, IF YOU'RE COMING. UP ON MY BACK.

THEEERE WE GO, BOY. HOLD TIGHT.

STUPID BOY.

CHARLENE? IT'S TIME TO GO BACK.

PETREFAX! ABANDON THIS FOLLY, I TELL YOU, OR BY ANGKOU AND THE ELDERS I SHALL--

I'M NOT GOING BACK, BRANT.

YOU HAVE TO LEAVE. THE STORM'S OVER. THE STORIES ARE OVER. IT'S ALL DONE. WE HAVE TO GO HOME.

WE HAVE TO LEAVE.

I LIKE IT HERE. I'VE ASKED HER. SHE SAID I COULD STAY.

BUT HOW--?

I'LL WORK. IN THE KITCHENS MAYBE. SHE SAID THEY COULD FIND A PLACE FOR ME HERE.

IT IS TRUE. SHE CAN STAY HERE, IF SHE WORKS HERE.

ALL OF US WHO LABOR AT THE INN HAVE HELD, IN THE PAST, OTHER PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS.

I CAME HERE MANY YEARS AGO, ON MY WAY TO ANOTHER JOURNEY; AND WHEN I TIRE OF MY WORK, THAT OTHER JOURNEY STILL WAITS FOR ME.

YOU MUST GO NOW, BRANT TUCKER.

BUT--

GOODBYE, BRANT. I'LL BE FINE.

SO *THEN* WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T *KNOW*. NOT REALLY. NEXT THING I'M FULLY CERTAIN OF, I'M WAKING UP IN A McDONALD'S PARKING LOT, IN THE CAR.

AND THIS *WOMAN* YOU WERE WITH, CHARLENE? WHAT HAPPENED TO *HER*, THEN?

THERE NEVER *WAS* A CHARLENE MOONEY. THE PAPERS FOR THE CAR WERE ALL IN *MY* NAME. I HAD A COPY OF THE COMPANY MAGAZINE--SHE WASN'T *LISTED*. HER PHOTOGRAPH WASN'T THERE...

CHARLENE'S CAR. IT WASN'T EVEN *SCRATCHED*.

SHE...

SHE.

I NEVER WENT BACK TO SEATTLE. I JUST STAYED OUT *HERE*. PHONED MY OLD EMPLOYERS AND TOLD THEM I WASN'T COMING BACK. I *COULDN'T* HAVE GONE BACK.

HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT MAYBE YOU *IMAGINED* THE WHOLE *THING*? THE *BAR*? THE *STORIES*? YOUR *WOMAN*?

OFTEN. BUT...

YEAH, BUT?

BUT THEN I REMEMBER LOOKING UP AT THOSE PEOPLE IN THE SKY.

I REMEMBER CRYING FOR MY FATHER.

I REMEMBER CHARLENE. NOBODY *ELSE* DOES. BUT *I* DO.

HEY, LISTEN. I GOTTA CLOSE UP NOW, OKAY?

OH. SURE.

LISTEN. I HOPE I DIDN'T *BORE* YOU.

YOU DIDN'T.

SOME NIGHTS ARE JUST *DEAD*. MAYBE IT'S THE *WEATHER*. I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE COMPANY.

SO, DRIVE SAFELY, NOW.

I DON'T *DRIVE* ANYMORE. IT FELT WEIRD, DRIVING THIS CAR OF MINE I KNEW I DIDN'T *OWN*...

HEY. THANKS FOR LISTENING. I SUPPOSE YOU MUST THINK I'M *CRAZY*.

NO. I *DON'T*. MAYBE I *OUGHT* TO. BUT I *DON'T*. YOU HEAR A LOT OF WEIRD STORIES BEHIND A BAR.

I SUPPOSE YOU *MUST* DO.

WELL, GOOD NIGHT.

GOOD NIGHT.

Worlds' End

• Neil Gaiman, writer • Bryan Talbot, penciller pgs. #1–9, 20–24; inker pg. 9 • Mark Buckingham, inker pgs. 1–3 •
• Dick Giordano, inker pgs. 4–8, 20–22 • Steve Leialoha, inker pgs. 23–24 • Gary Amaro, penciller pgs. 10–19 • Tony Harris, inker pgs. 10–19 •
• Daniel Vozzo, colorist • Todd Klein, letterer • Karen Berger, editor • Shelly Roeberg, assistant editor •
Color separations by Android Images & Digital Chameleon

THE SANDMAN

Featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

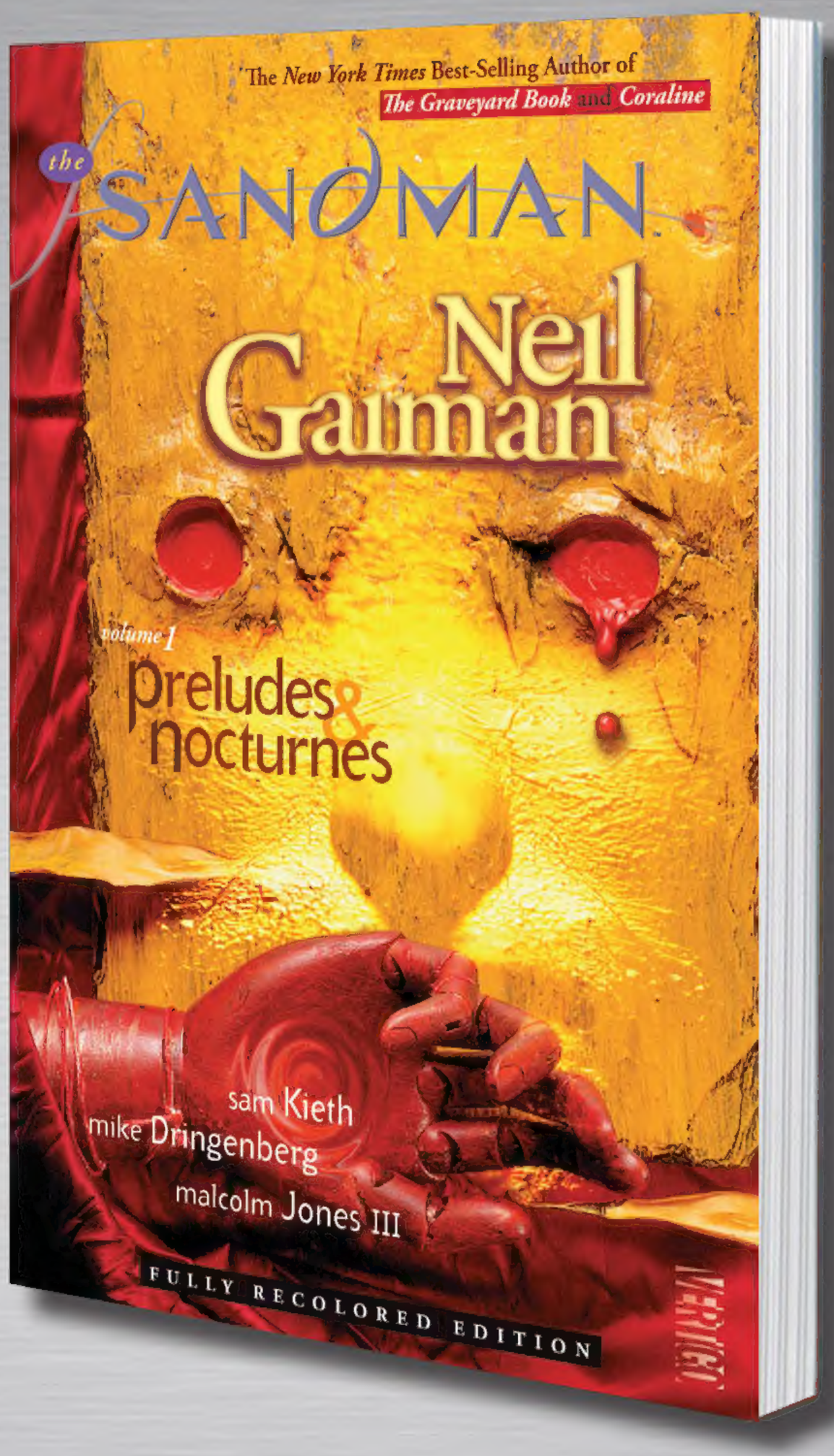
NEIL GAIMAN

"What Gaiman has written is a comics masterpiece."
– PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

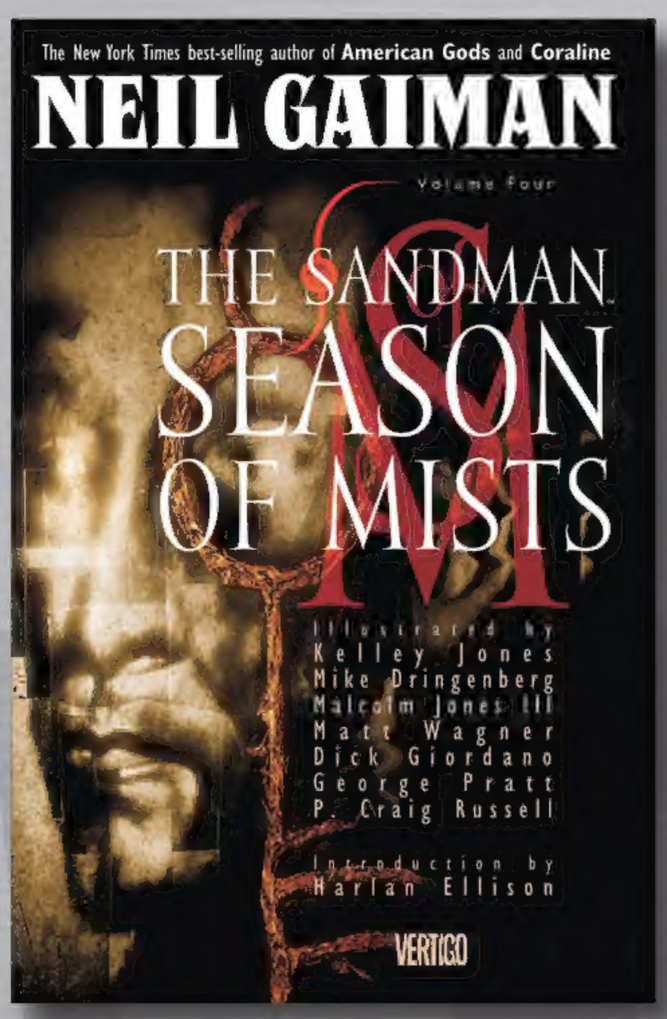
"SANDMAN just might be the smartest comic book ever written."
– USA TODAY

"The landmark comic-book series that actually made death seem cool."
– ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

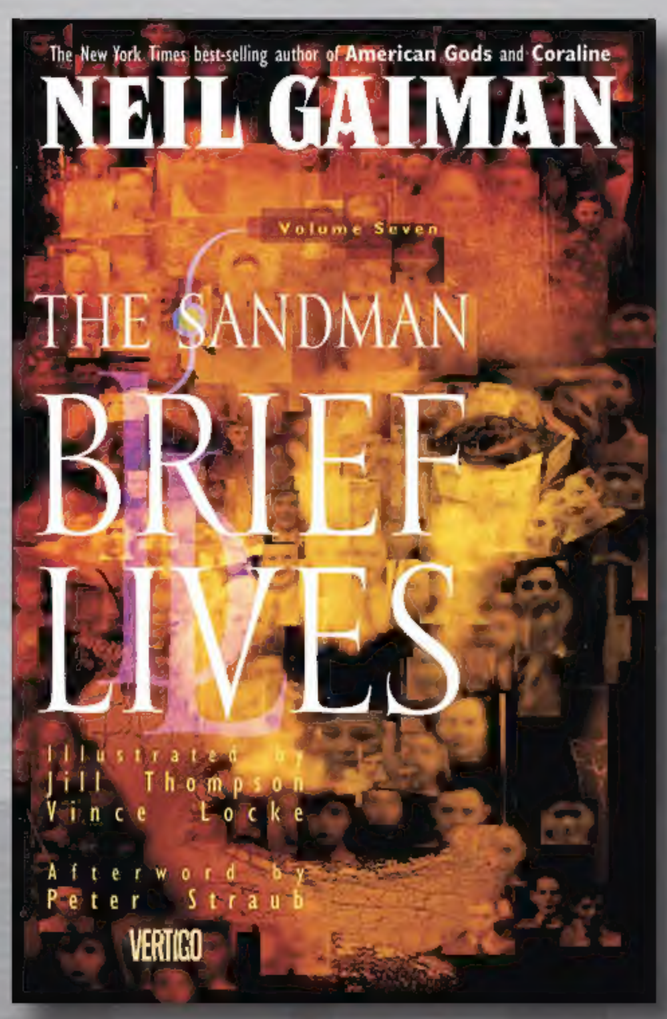
"This is the stuff dreams are made of."
– IGN.com



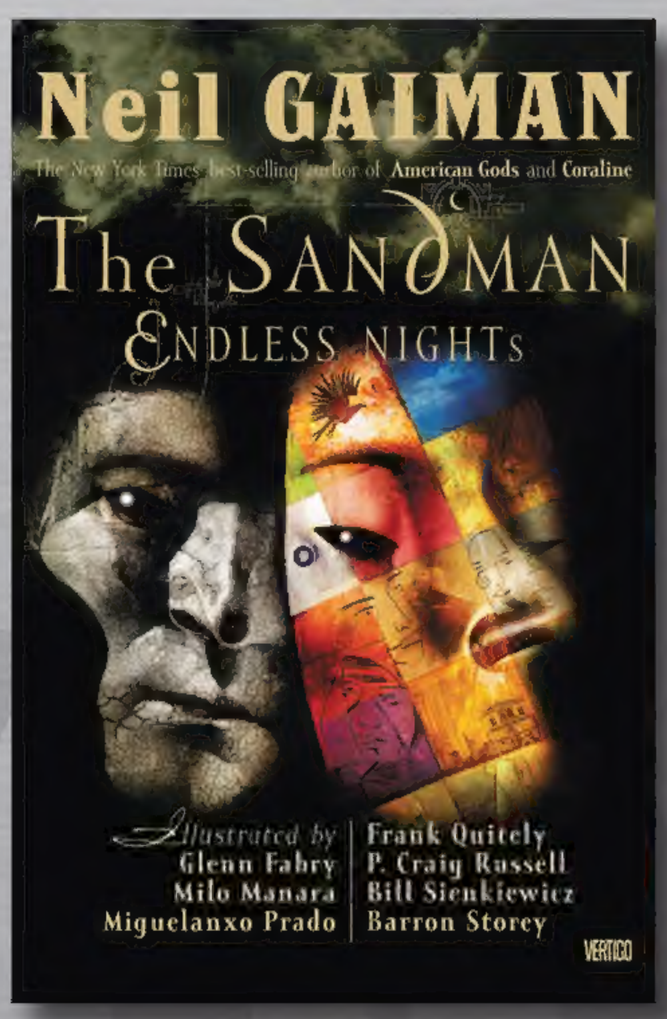
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



Use the **BUY IN PRINT** feature to find a comics shop near you.
Check back here every week for **NEW DIGITAL RELEASES**!

Suggested for Mature Readers

E
E
M
P
I
R
SON OF ULTRON